

If Dog Lovers Get Into Eagle Battle, We're In For Trouble

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MERTZON — Trouble and misery ought to be the password for the Shortgrass Country. We don't get one problem solved until a dozen more threaten us. Drouths overlap into floods, ferocious viruses are replacements of everlasting plagues. If the cost of money at the bank isn't going up, the price of livestock is going down.

The smartest East Indian sage ever to blow a snake flute couldn't figure out how we hold together.

Take for example the way the golden eagle controversy has been progressing.

Two years ago, one of the ranching industry's shrewdest leaders was able to open negotiations with the bird watchers. From then on, it looked favorable that we might once again be able to protect our flocks from aerial depredations. The sheep and goat herders' associations has calmed down, and the bird lovers seemed willing to talk peace.

That's the way it was until about three weeks ago. Then some city hombre over in San Angelo got after an eagle for trying to pack off his \$500 Miniature Schnauzer dog. The newspaper didn't give the incident much of a splash, but I've been worried that a bunch of aroused dog owners were going to blow the lid off the whole deal.

It would be just like one of those big city fellows to get all wrought up over his dog and reopen a long series of hostilities between ranchers and eagle lovers. Fortunately, the Schnauzer didn't bite the eagle, nor did the dog's owner hit the bird he was brandishing. Luck was with us there. Why, if that high priced house dog had broken the skin above the eagle's talon line, the head man of the Peace Corps couldn't have straightened out the mess in his lifetime. It's sad to think what would have ensued if the enraged dog man had knocked the bird down.

The rancher vs. bird society tussle is a delicate enough issue without dog people joining the battle. Citizens who insists on tying their money up in pampered canines ought to protect their investments by keeping their animals in the house. An eagle can't judge pedigrees from way up in the sky. As far as that goes, considering the large numbers of pooches running around in the city, it's difficult for a groundling to separate the blooded hounds from the curs.

But that's the story of the ranch business. We get choused from every direction. Ballet dancers handicapped by tricky big toe joints don't live as precariously as we do.

Perhaps I've grown too jumpy. The urban incident could go unnoticed. But one thing is sure; it would help if eagles would lay off lap dogs until we finish drawing up a truce with the eagle people.